

Vestas - the fight continues



- **No victimisation!**
- **Reinstate the occupiers!**

After eighteen days in occupation, the first stage of the campaign against job losses at Vestas Newport has come to a close but workers have made it clear that the fight goes on. The eyes of the world turned to Vestas as bailiffs removed workers on Friday; a lunchtime protest of hundreds of workers and their families showed the continued support that the occupation has. Now that support must be turned out towards the wider trade union movement to continue to build on the pressure that the government and the employer are already feeling.

Effect of occupation

For over a fortnight, the occupation at Vestas has sustained high-profile media coverage from the New York Times to NewsNight. It has shown an anti-union employer that they cannot treat workers in the callous manner that they have and expect to get away with it. It has acted as a beacon to other workers, with sit-ins in Dublin and elsewhere being directly inspired by it. On Thursday evening, for the first time, it also forced the government to the table. Energy Minister Joan Ruddock met with a delegation including Vestas occupier Mike Godley and RMT general secretary Bob Crow.

Ruddock claims the government has done all it can to keep the factory open, including apparently offering to buy out Vestas, but Vestas management have refused. It seems Vestas intend to leave the site dormant to possibly reopen further down the line. What sort of a world is it where a company is able to dump workers like this?

Where skills can be thrown out on the scrap heap even when there's a social need for them? The government should be forced to take over Vestas, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need, whether Vestas managers like it or not.



"This struggle is an inspiration. These workers, in an anti-union company, have organised themselves in the most fantastic way and can be a beacon for other struggles. If other workers copy the way these workers have organised themselves with committees and so on they won't go far wrong. And this will not be an isolated incident with the way the economy is in real crisis, with recession and the credit crunch. People have got to stand up and fight for jobs and join trade unions and fight back. The TUC is not helping and the government certainly isn't helping. With the bosses cutting pay and hours and getting rid of people – this kind of pro-active trade unionism is the way to go."

Peter Gale, RMT Organiser



Pressure across the trade union movement, including fully supporting the Vestas workers' call for a national day of action on Wednesday 12th August, needs to be built for, now.

No victimisation

The solution to save jobs and the environment is nationalisation. But whether this is achieved or not, an immediate demand of the workers' movement must be the reinstatement of those who occupied.

Almost a week into the occupation, they were served dismissal notices hidden under pizza! This heartless tactic means that those courageous workers who took a stand are not 'eligible' for redundancy payments. An appeal on the grounds of unfair dismissal is being lodged by the RMT. Messages of support, trade union branch resolutions, letters of protest to the employer and other means to express anger at the dirty tactics of Vestas bosses are needed.

In addition to this, a much longer-term struggle may have to be waged to guarantee that those workers that took part in the occupation are not black-balled, that whatever the outcome of this dispute no potential future employer is able to hold their stand over the last few weeks against them. In order to achieve this, it will be necessary to strengthen the trade union movement on the Island. The experience of struggle and the exemplary role of the RMT means that this strengthening is taking place.

Island shaken

This dispute has shaken the entire Island. The main political parties have been exposed in the eyes of many by not supporting the Vestas workers. When it comes to the next election, why shouldn't one of the Vestas workers consider standing? A workers' MP on the Island now would have made things easier for the Vestas workers. Let's make sure that workers have a political voice in the future.

The Socialist Party gives full backing to the Vestas workers. Our members play a full role in their trade unions and Socialist Party members hold positions on the national executives of a number of unions including the PCS (civil servants), Unison (public sector workers) the CWU (postal and telecoms union) and the FBU (Fire Brigades Union). We campaign for democratic fighting unions and for those unions who are affiliated to New Labour to break this link. During the recent European elections we stood candidates under the "No to EU" banner alongside the RMT. We stand for workers' MPs on a worker's wage.

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